

Robert Curvin Interview  
Interviewee: Sharpe James  
Interviewer: Robert Curvin

Robert Curvin: Are you ready to go?

Sharpe James: If it rains, I won't be able to stop them

Robert Curvin: If it rains, we will just stop. Okay. Now I got a nice frame and we can see half your body. What the deal is that I wanted you to tell you a story and this is for posterity.

Sharpe James: You came dressed in your church attire

Robert Curvin: No, you're looking fine, the color is great. So, Let's start by just saying Mr. Sharpe James, and um you've agreed to do this interview voluntarily and it will be used for educational purposes about the city and its history of politics and so on. What I would like to ask you to start with is to just say a little bit about how you got into Newark, and your life in the city as a young child, and growing up in the city, what was it like?

Sharpe James: This is Sharpe James and I agree to voluntarily make this interview with Mr. Robert Curvin. I hope it will be used for educational purposes and um of course I'm doing with my own freewill and hope that it will provide some information and insight into the city of Newark and of course Sharpe James personally. Sharpe James is um, very strange. You know people think I'm the Mayor of Newark and I always accept that because I've been here since about four years of age, attended little street school, Southside High School but that story is really is from someone who escaped from Jacksonville, Florida from an abusive stepfather, my mother made the fire on the tracks one night, early in the morning, and we escaped, stop the train in the middle of somewhere in Jacksonville Florida, hop on the train and riding days and weeks and months and then ended up in Philadelphia and then of course in Liberty New Jersey where my uncle lived and finally in Newark, Nj. Graduated from um Southside High School, Rockville and I attended what then was called Passan school of education located in East Orange, New Jersey but it merged with Montclair State College so I'm really a graduate from Montclair state college in terms of education and then of course a master's degree from Springfield college and graduate studies in Washington State University where I did research with um Petery Corporation, Dr. Philip about the influence of exercise on the body but more importantly, Sharpe James became the community activists, late Congressman Donald Payne had knocked on my door and said 'Sharpe, you hear that coach, you hear that big mouth running around the street. We want you to become a distributor, he wants a distributor and he said

Mr. Joe Coin is in the hospital now and he is not going to run for district. We have to be leading in the 39<sup>th</sup> district of the South ward and so I put my name on the ballots, got 200 signatures and became a district leader many many years ago.

Robert Curvin: Now let me stop you here because it will be helpful to explain what the real job of the district leader is.

Sharpe James: And of course, once becoming a district leader in the area of Southward, my job was basically to make sure the streets are clean, ensure the trees are grown, to assist the people in the neighborhood, you want your neighborhood, your block, that little square, that you have maybe twelve or fourteen blocks, to be the most beautiful in all of Newark. So, as a district leader the people expect you to address their needs and concerns for that area in the ward. In the Southward, 39<sup>th</sup> district and then of course I was also a coach at West Side High School, teaching at West Side High School and I had left Quitman Street School where I met my wife, I was in Broadway elementary school, Quitman Street community school met my wife married her on a Friday, came back to school on Monday. That how you do it in those days and then I was active in the community, became the president of Area board 9 and that was UCC.

Robert Curvin: United Community Cooperation

Sharpe James: United Community Cooperation was the only cooperation that we have in the city of Newark as African-Americans and I was President, one of 316 and that was voluntarily, which we named Dr. Martin Luther King after his untimely death in 1968, April 4. When we in fact the [unclear] President had flown to Atlanta to participate in his funeral and that was an interesting experience because the government center sent us a plane for us to fly to Atlanta and then Engelhard sent a plane. We went to the airport, very interesting and Engelhard had a private jet with young ladies on there, serving food and drinks, luxury, you know all the luxury you could think about. They don't have nothing and we going on Engelhard jet and I said wait a minute, are we dealing with slavery in South Africa, making money off that, let's go with the military plan, military airplane transportation. Let's get on that one thinking that they had listened to me, we would walked out on the runway and get on the map plan and all the food and all the services. We all went to Atlanta, Georgia and I was president there and then of course how I became president will be a book in itself because former Southward Councilman, Lee Bernstein was the president and never held a meeting, federal dollars were coming in to inspect by the Councilman and we burst in walls of President of Area Board 9, UCC and we asked the community at, the black community that Mr. Bernstein, we got to hold a meeting, annual meetings, have annual elections in Newark and I remember that one day someone said 'Get

Sharpe James, get Sharpe James, get that coach, get that president, that big mouth guy' and they sent me down to 555 Elizabeth Avenue where Lee Bernstein had his office. And they said go in there and tell them that we ought to have election, it's a violation of statute [unclear]. And I walked in that room and there was Lee Bernstein, Councilman Lee Bernstein, Roddy Lucius (?), one of the police officers in Newark and they put a gun put it in my mouth and say nigga you better get out of here or I will shoot you and isn't that crazy to tell you that right now. Normally we act crazy but I learned that in that case you don't act crazy and I said gentlemen you are wrong and totally they were Crazy for sending me in there. Those people were crazy, so went to UCC and we asked for Aaron and the famous [unclear] Ward who he was the overall president of UCC and he set up a commission with Mr. May Burry and say it's gonna be an election, it's gonna be a hearing and we went to a whole year of debate about election, about who should have control of Area Board 9 and finally there was an election. We set up election, set up machines in 316, 315, 316 and I remember walking over to uh Timothy Steel who was very popular, a famous person wearing his Dukos? hat and his jacket, and I said Mr. Steel, it is wrong, sad and you should be ashamed for yourself for allowing us to fight this battle for a whole year and now you are telling me there have to be a democratic election now you are telling us we have to draw for ballots on the line. I mean this, this is terrible and this is still looked down with [unclear]. Let me tell you something, ignore the democratic election, ignore the [unclear] and you will be on Line A [laughs]. Now we can [] get on Line A, democratic election, fair election [] but you will be on Line A and of course we ran the banner, we the people, we the people a very tremendous group, Mr. Greenberg, Mr. [unclear], Mr. Dunphy and I integrated team and we won and that's how I became president of the board. Thereafter, I even became President of Weequahic Community Council, um that was a story in itself too, opposed by many persons, Caroline Kelly and all the others but once again Sharpe James is elected president of Area board 9, president of Weequahic Community Council and all these things led to the famous Black and Puerto-Rican convention in 1970. When Reverend Sharpe or Archbishop Sharpe, first person in the history of this state to be elected from a recall election. We had recall with Bernstein, because he defeated the area board but the first successful recall in the history of New Jersey was to recall Lee Bernstein and place him off in Reverend Horace P. Sharper. And then at this convention in 1970, with prominent players like Mayor Baraka, Mr. Wright, George Richardson it was decided that George Richardson and Ken Gibson will vie for mayor and reverend Horace P Sharpe will cover the convention and will recall the candidate of the Southward. At the beginning of the major?, George Richardson believes there's something wrong, its wrong, its fixed you want Ken Gibson not me. You want Ken Gibson because he had the courage to run in 1966. I'm walking out and I said, no it's not fair and George Richardson who was probably the most popular, most well-

known, handsome debonair the black Clark Gable, walked out of the convention. Not only did he walk out of the convention but he took Reverend Horace P. Sharper, the Southward candidate with him and they were left without a Southward candidate. Then came of the idea that President of Weequahic (?) who was then working on team off team total employment or something for the city of Newark go to then 38 Wilbur Avenue, knock on the door and ask that coach, ask that President of the Area board, ask that president of Weequahic community Sharpe James if he will like to come into the Black and Puerto-Rican Convention and run as Southward candidate and he knocked on my door, how are you, we would like for you to be a candidate in the black and Puerto-Rican convention in that's taking place Junior High School. I don't know what she is talking about, I didn't know about Southward candidate. I didn't know where City Hall was, I'd never been to City Hall, I said okay if you believe and the community believes in Sharpe James will be a fit for the convention, then I'll go but I'll never forget, we went to Junior High School around 2000 people. Um, all the folks were there, Raymond M Brown, Raymond A Brown was the keynote speaker Ozzie Davis was there, it was selected already from our community and I remember that they went turn by turn on the stage and said who they were and they said alright Sharpe, it's your turn and I said its my turn to do what? They said walk out on the stage and tell them your name, history and everything. So, I walked out on the stage and say I'm Sharpe James, I live in the Southward, President of Area Board 9, President of Weequahic community council, I'm a coach of West Side High School and I'm the candidate of the Southward seat and they started clapping, applauding, yelling, screaming, shouting and I went back stage and the person I popped into was our legendary dean the politics, Earl Harris, who we call the silver fox because of the grey hair. I said Earl, Earl guess what those people like me, did you hear the response out there and Earl said Sharpe, it's not they like you, they thought you were Bozo the Clown. You have checkered pant, checkered plaid shirt, black and white shoes, check the picture. So going back now, you know we have the convention, George Richardson walks out, he says he is grateful for Ken Gibson and can get Sharpe James can tell you for almost forty, fifty years later he was grateful for Ken Gibson, and we felt that since he had the courage to run in 1966, he should be the candidate 1970 although George Richardson had all the pedigree, looks, experience, former Assemblyman. He was the black Clark Gable but the convention was gonna lead towards Ken Gibson. When Reverend Horace P. Sharperr walked out, they had no candidate of the Southward and the next steps they invite Sharpe James by sending Roof? McClain who was working then for Officer Jones?, team (total employment something else) for the city of Newark and persuaded me to come into the convention which I did and then of course um when I was out there introducing myself and they were clapping and laughing, I thought they were in support of me and Earl Harris told me they were

laughing and clapping because you look like a clown Sharpe and I keep that picture in my little City Hall, 1072 Bergen street, checkered pants, grey checkered pants, pink checkered shirt and afro uncombed of course and my black and white Tom McCain shoes, kept that picture for almost two decades [laughs] and that's how Bozo the Clown won, that's the most important and of course, we were successful in the Black and Puerto Rican convention. Ken Gibson became the first African American Mayor, of a major Northeast city, Earl Harris our Dean was elected at large, Dennis A Westbrooks in central Ward and I was elected in the South ward. So, we didn't win our ticket we didn't win [at large?] or in the East Ward, we didn't win C. Theodore Pickney at large, we didn't win with Donald Tucker at large that year but it was a beginning of African American leadership. Each successful election after that we would gain until eventually, we did have the majority of the entire Newark city council.

Robert Curvin: So, what was it like being a Councilman and um you have never been involved in politics and now you are saying that you didn't even know what the whole thing was about and here you are seating down?

Sharpe James: Being a councilman was real awakening because first of all, you look at the council today and you look at it when I started. Then, we were in one room, big room with um section off, just petition at our desk. When you hear councilors talking to a constituent, you could hear next door what happened and I remember one time when Mildred Helms, oh what a great name! would have started all this houses in Southward. Mildred Helms, I gotta always remember that name, built so many houses before it was bought, before we knew her. She came into the Council meeting and asked Earl Harris for some help, some assistance and he frowned at her for a while because he was Council at large, representative of the whole city and he said go wait outside, she walks through the door through the petition, which led into this bastard large room, and sat down and everyone just started berating her. All of a sudden she goes 'I heard everything you said there,' maybe that's why we were not supposed to be in one room with petitions because now private offices, private streets, five aide because they only had one aide then and no one had a car, only the president Louis Turco at the time who was named president because he had the most votes percentage wise coming from the eastward, we named him [unclear] because we thought he was very black and most have been under the lamp and one of the most clever and most articulate, smartish politician we have in the city of Newark, former Louis Turco, council city president um, he had use of a car for motor pool and one day we all seat in the room and Earl Harris said, I want a car and President Louis Turco said well you don't have a car, and Earl said well I want a car, he's the president and Earl said I don't care if he is the president, I have the right because my vote is just as important as yours and there were arguing and Earl said well, I want a car. The consensus was if you get a car, every

council member has to get a car and Earl said fine, order nine I don't care. So, they ordered nine cars and I raised my hand and I said oh hold on, no one put a gun to our head to say become a councilman, no one put a gun in our head and told us to [unclear]. We knew the salary which that time was twelve thousand dollars a year verses eighty-six thousand dollars now and all kinds of additional perks. We shouldn't put this burden on the citizens of Newark. Earl looked at me and he said Look Sharpe, if you wanna be atom, if you gonna be a local tom, that's fine. You go take the bus, ride the bicycle, go buy your own car, I want a car so I became, the council began to attack Sharpe James because Sharpe James didn't accept the car and it became raise time, we said look, lets raise against ourselves and I said well, the law said the city council can't go to himself a raise, you have to wait until you are out of office and then you set the salary for the incoming and I don't care about that. I will eat now. So, every year, council began in midnight when all the citizens have gone, reached out into its drawer, pulled out the resolution which includes giving out seventy-five percent increase, giving out, pass off another aide, continue with another car and the perks kept going up and somehow, I felt it was wrong but

Robert Curvin: How did the statement of this happened because?

Sharpe James: It still happens. [laughs], it still happens and it hasn't changed

Robert Curvin: It still happens? But doesn't the state have a rule on this

Sharpe James: They do, it's against the law and it hasn't changed. It had been going on since 1970, the council get himself a raise and it's against the law. The law says only a seating council cannot give himself a raise. We've been doing this since 1970. So, I was under attack, I was the person the council didn't like, I was the council member who was called different, you know I was the black sheep of the city council. Despite that, I communicate with them, despite that try to move legislation, despite that I was always concerned about the Southward. No more tarring in the South under Sharpe James's account. We try to fix up all the buildings under Sharpe J, clean up the water under Sharpe J, the face program under Sharpe J. When we renovated all of the homes and streets, we started in this Clinton Hill area, Clinton Avenue and all the streets 10<sup>th</sup> street and all up. Then finally we moved into the Southward, the program became Suspect watchers and we ended up the Eugene Campbell who was the superintendent, we had his house renovated and that created some progress. Eventually the program ended, the FACE program probably one of the most successful early community rehabilitation programs at the hands of the city of Newark and so continuing this relationship and continuing fighting among the council people and then in 1982 when Earl Harris decided to run against Ken Gibson, we didn't want that. We had asked that one run for the council

city and one run for the mayor and then couldn't agree and I don't like the sound, Council Executive mayor, they know how to say it, they don't have to say anything else. We could never get Earl or Ken wanting to say I'm running for the county and the other to say I'm running for mayor in order to broaden our base because I kept saying we can't feed everyone at 920 Broad Street which was city Hall. We should be seeking a seat in the county as well same with Earl Lado and were they had low marks at the county level and Mayor Jackson, Campbell and all the others, but they had both the county and the city in order to take care of a constituents. All too often when we had Newark, everyone wants to be mayor of Newark, everyone wants to be councilmen of Newark. Newark alone cannot address the needs of indigenous people that reside in Essex County, so we never could get them run. Earl decided that he was going to run against Ken Gibson, sweep ken Gibson out of office, it was time for a change and Earl will boastfully stand up and say imma get a bus, imma get a broom, I'll clean up city hall and I will sweep the hall out and he would laugh and he would go loud, people will laugh and the crowd will go wild. Imma sweep them all out Sharpe, just watch it, K you are gone and look at it, ken would say nothing, wouldn't respond, he was a dead man and everyone once thought that Ken looked like the weight was seating on his shoulders, so serious and that he really made a decision on behalf of you. Earl was colorful, boastful, loud, arrogant and I'm gonna get that big truck and I'm gonna big broom and I'm gonna sweep them out, but the one mistake he made was when he became an advocate for dogs. When I become mayor, I'll will get dogs and he team with the people in northward to suggest that the Newark police department could better their services by having police dogs, that turned the community into an uproar. African American people could see bold crime, African American people could visualize dogs attacking the freedom writers of the city and the movement. The dogs in their hoses all came out and said El, don't do this, Earl don't support dogs. And he will always say they're not gonna bite you unless you start running, but anyway Earl became intent on bringing police dog, campaign extensively in the northward which he won, extensively in the eastward which he won and when the returns came, Earl was so far ahead that the reporters came to Ken Gibson headquarters to speak to Pearl B and say Ms. B, Earl is ready to announce that he won, returns, returns in the north, returns in the east. Earl is way ahead and he is gonna win this bill, what can you say to that? Pearl B who was the confidante of Ken Gibson who had also won as one of the first figures in large a success story, she looked at the importance overall and said just wait until returns come in the south, central, and west ward, just wait and sure enough the returns came in because of the dog issue, because the rear being considered the white neighborhood at that time, Earl campaigns exclusively in the north and eastward ignoring the base. When returns came in, in the south and central ward, they were like nine to one, ten to one and whereas Earl was poised to make a speech for victory he now had

to prepare a speech for defeat because Ken Gibson overwhelmingly defeated him south and central ward and even the west ward.

Robert Curvin: So, that was the '82 election?

Sharpe James: '82, so I'm looking at that election and I think the consensus was Ken Gibson did not win the election, Earl Harris lost the election [break]. You know you look at the campaign in 1982, two of our heroes, two of our most trusted and respected politicians in the city. You know Earl Harris reform Essex County College in the city of Newark. Ken Gibson, the engineer is our hero, the first African mayor of the northeast city and here the consensus was Ken did not win, Earl lost and so I had been a ward council and in 1982, I was elected at large, people kept coming to Sharpe James was a mayor because I was very visible, I was available out there dancing, a coach, visible. I received twenty-nine thousand votes, one of the largest ever in the history of Newark. So, now I am the ward council man who was the first to run unopposed, in 1978, no one ran against me, now in 1982, I am elected council at large as the top votes carrier and I would never forget once again having the most votes without winning through the council. I told the council ladies and gentlemen I got the most votes and like Louis Turco and others before me who became president and I'll would like to be council president, I'm at the top. And Donald tucker looked at me and gave every obscenity law that he could and said that it's not black and white, you have to get five votes to be council president and I'll never forget that not the most votes, blah blah blah but who can get five votes blah, blah, blah. So, I and Donald Tucker got into a tremendous fight and we were on the Montgomery cliff, the mall and brand of the council. And people always had us fighting each other, and we were fighting for the city of Newark. It just like when Molly Cliff was in the hospital near death and her mouth was white, couldn't even speak, the headlines said Molly Brown must be the happiest man in the world, his number one-character actor and competitor is near death. The next day we had to track down that paper, Molly Brown told his story. He was standing at the hospital bed looking down at monte and Montgomery Clifford said Monty get well, you are my competition and that's how Donald Tucker and I were in the city council. We found battles, he wanted to change the name of Elizabeth Avenue to Martin Luther King and I said Well how are going to change the name, how are we going to change all these businesses, why can't we get another street. We fought over that and I won, we fought over every issue but it was always about the city of Newark.

Robert Curvin: You don't think there was any personal rivalry between you

Sharpe James: Well, we, Donald was the most certainly prepared for fulltime council person, came in six o'clock in the morning, didn't talk to anyone on the



elevator and stayed to 7pm at night and he was about to [unclear]. Later on, when I became mayor and I always tell people that Donald said Sharpe, I want this, Sharpe I want that and I gave it to him even we disagreed, even when they were about to take and close a sector on Elizabeth Avenue, something about bookkeeping, later on it became about a mouse or something. He came on and said Sharpe I need a hundred and eight-eight dollars or they are gonna call you and you are gonna send it to then, and I looked at him and said Donald, what's wrong with you? I'm mayor but I gave him that bill, which is in form of a motor bill. We had a hundred and eighty-eight thousand dollars that we always accrue because I didn't want to tell him the city is bankrupt; the city had no money. There was always money that always accrue, there was always some project you start that didn't go through. I gave out that money on a Monday, Tuesday I appointed Ambrose as our new police Director because Joe sent me state bill and Al to be the black cop. And Donald lobbied with the black cop saying Sharpe must have lost his mind, he must be a bad man, he has lost his mind, he must take some money because he just appointed a white cop.

Robert Curvin: The day after you gave him money?

Sharpe James: Yes, the day after I gave him money. I gave and in fact when he was the commissioner on the Passaic [unclear] Commissioner and again there is the state senator and that took, it requires senatorial courtesy for all of us to approve him Ron Rice, Cory, and myself. We never approved that Donald Tucker and Donald Tucker said Sharpe I want to have this, Sharpe I want your approval, please release me and get the others to do it. I call the other centers and I say let's do this for him, I want Donald Tucker to be a part of the commission of Passaic Valley. You know I've been fighting for ward acquisition program; you know I've been saying never own a house without a mortgage and here we had these great assets all over the city of Newark, we claim we are broke, and we going create a water authority, borrow money and pay off that money and Donald was opposed to it, he was very ridiculous about it and he said chiefs don't lobby, chiefs relax. Let the councilmen and the city in charge, if you sign those papers that's a deal, so I sign them, call my aide, Mr. William James and say take this to Trenton and take care of this and sure enough he went round, took the paper and put int in the box of the office of legislative services and then I got a call saying there was a delay in Newark ward acquisition plan and there was a councilman screaming and shouting that it was the worst thing he ever heard off, it was terrible, Sharpe was giving the city away, selling the city away and I said what the name and he said Donald Tucker. I got on the other phone and say Willy where are that paper and he said its upstairs and I said you better go upstairs and get that paper, Donald Tucker is on the first floor, and that was Donald Tucker but didn't I learn something? I learned that and that's why I tell people the most important story, I was in a pre-meeting council complaining that we

had paid [unclear] and Lynn Buckley twenty-one million dollars to lobby for our port authority and I said that enough is enough that we spent this money over seven years, it's time to call it quits, they are over-billing us, Buckley is been paid too much. We gotta stop this nonsense, Burke was in the room and Lee Buckley said I want Sharpe out of here, get him out of here, I wanna talk to the lawyer in the room, get him out of here and the room became silent. All of a sudden Donald Tucker threw his chair back to the wall, ran over to Lee Buckley who had just represented him, represented him for free, pro bono about the shooting by his cousin in his house, a young lady you know got shot. Lee Buckley was the one who was trying to defend and answer fictitious Donald Tucker, picked him up by the collar, held this man up and he was shaking and said don't you ever ask my mayor to leave any room, I'll throw you out the window and then let him down and everybody looked in shock and I knew, I'll always knew Montgomery Cliff, Donald and I will fight but we will always fight about Newark, Donald will call me bad names, mff. He never called my Mayor and I looked him that way too. There was a love for one another, a respect for one another because we both know what Newark wants on our sleeves. You will never find two council people who fought harder for Newark those days than councilmen Donald Tucker and Sharpe James. We were fighting about Newark and sometimes we disagreed on the method to achieve that goal. So,

Robert Curvin: Let me quickly ask you to go back to when you were a councilman and Ken was mayor. I've talked to people about when Ken was mayor. What's your general view of?

Sharpe James: Of who?

Robert Curvin: Of Ken as a mayor? Ken Gibson, what's his legacy?

Sharpe James: Ken, Well Ken Gibson, you know is an engineer became a mayor in 1970 at the time when our city was so racially divided and then we had that cory tower incident and the issue of police directory went on and on with [unclear]. Ken was Mayor in 1970 but the legislature by the Newark was still in control by the old guard, the old school and so he never got that cooperation and I always say to myself that the sixteen years Ken spent in office, half of that had to be twenty years in a cell because of the constant fight and bickering he had to go through in the city council. I remember that then Westward will stand and fight with Valene fight with Julianna, fight with Temple, it never ended and Miki Bom temple was trying to be neutral and it was a disarray and I think Ken paid the price, there is always a price when you are the first, Jackie Robinson paid the price, Al-fael Gibson paid that price and Ken Gibson paid that price. so, in time he brought stability to the city because he was unflappable, I mean you can call the names and all but he was unflappable. In fact, I think to his

detriment, I would never forget Carina (Carrinpo?) and Anthony [unclear] came to his office banging in his door, we want a meeting, we want a meeting, we demand that you meet with us and they really broke down the door, barged in, one of them dropped the gun on the floor, picked up the gun and Ken Gibson had meeting with them and even to this day there is disagreement that the disrespect shown by Anthony [unclear] in that instance, Ken Gibson should had him shut, removed him from his office but not to accept them breaking down his door, but not to accept them dropping a weapon in his room and most importantly not to grant them

Robert Curvin: Now, Carina was charged in that incident. Carina was charged in that incident.

Sharpe James: He was?

Robert Curvin: Yes.

Sharpe James: I always tell people what a homeless man knew, [unclear] went over the fence the secret service shot him, they asked no question, no trespassing and I always thought about Ms. Bunker in New York, senior citizen with a Knife and twelve police officers and they shot him, no debate. I recall when as mayor same situation face me, my good friend Reverend Harte Sharpe brought two busloads of people from New York and placed them in front of my house with bullhorns saying Sharpe James we are here to lynch you, we are here to lynch you, drag you out of the house and we are going to target you over the incident that a fourteen-year-old African American girl had been shot in a van by police officers about three or four in the morning. The question I raised while calling for the investigation, removing the police officers, taking his guns away from him was that we should not have our fourteen-year-old out at 1,2 or 3 am in the morning in a stolen vehicle driving in reckless speed. We should be opposed of that and because I made that statement, Reverend Sharpe came to demonstrate three days in front of my house and it was on the third night that Al said, Sharpe we are not here to play tennis, we are coming in and taking you out of the house and I went on bullhorn and I said if anyone cross that line, they had put a metal gate down the street, you had my gate and a metal gate in front and I said if anyone cross that picket line, they would be shot was my statement with my good friend Al Sharpe, and I told this other people, you don't shoot then I'll shoot you. They are going to obey the law, they had a right to demonstrate but they are going to stay on the other side of the street, there is not going to be no disrespect for this office. He followed up the next morning and came to break down my door and I said oh I will not sin and I did it because I was thinking of Ken Gibson and imperialism, I will not sin. I would not see Reverend Sharpe in that way and by the way as with Donald Tucker, Earl Sharpe was the one person who came to support me, walk the streets of Newark during my tour to

heed the election, come on down to the produce departments, went to the supermarkets, Sharpe produce housing, Sharpe produce jobs, everybody run up and he was the one that I held my hand in 2002, the same Sharpe that when I was in a suite at the metal end, a boxing match, they were booing and I think they called him broad Tijuana, broad Tijuana, boo, boo. I walked down and said Mr. Sharp you can come up to my box upstairs and sure enough he came and ate all my chicken, all my food. I invited them to the box in order to get away from the crowd but he came to the box to eat [laughs] but we've been friends and here again we have to learn to disagree on issues and not take it personally. I have to commend Reverend Earl Sharpe on that, we were able to be on a different side at different situation and still be respectful to each other, and that's important and that's the same with Donald Tucker

Robert Curvin: So, what do you think, what about your legacy, think about what about your legacy

Sharpe James: Ken legacy is gonna be loved by all. Well, he brought stability to our racial arm and gave African Americans a chance to dream big dreams, Sharpe couldn't be mayor if not for Ken Gibson and Earl Harris and Donald Tucker could be elected because of Ken Gibson but our people are funny because when I became mayor, I invited them and said what do you remember of Ken Gibson, I wanted to hit the ground running, I wanted to not make the same mistakes, I wanted to help people, I must say I pulled over a hundred people, what do you remember about Ken Gibson thank you, what do you remember about Ken and someone said I remember the picnic, it shocked me. They didn't talk about balancing the budget, they didn't talk about the government they talked about picnic, hamburger and guess what Sharpe James had a picnic every Thursday and I just, maybe tell will say Shape I did good. I just wanted to show you never know what people are really thinking about you. Let me tell you about it, you have a budget hearing in City Hall 647 people voted on it, at 10 am vote on it at 6pm, introduce this and two people show up and Flarity and Gen Flarity, we never remember all that and the citizens didn't attend the budget and picnic that's it

Robert Curvin: Now let's think of Sharpe's legacy?

Sharpe James: Shape's James legacy and people said well, Sharpe James, he built Prudential center and they don't mean that he did the modeling bit for that to happen, and it wouldn't have if happened if I didn't have the settlement board put up a hundred and eighty-five million dollars, seat in a meeting every week with my team Sharpe James [unclear], Sharpe built the New jersey performing Arts Center [claps], Sharpe brought the rolling skating rink with Tom Mellosio, Sharpe James brought the golf field with Joe DiVincenzo, Sharpe James gave us IDT, Sharpe James gave us NBA in

the city of Newark, Sharpe James gave us Home depot, Sharpe James gave us Applebee's, Sharpe James gave us downtown which had took thirty years, downtown from the airport to the train that something as a councilman of South ward, I came with that idea because the laid ooo what's his name Pudeur stood at Meeker Avenue and said Sharpe the train used to stop right there were you used to sell hotdogs and he said yes we should stop the train right there and I tried to get the train on [unclear] New Jersey transit 1972, I remember the day. I went before him and said stop the train and McCleery street and then we go put a line right there to the airport and they laughed at me. Amtrack because they told me that I couldn't get the train to stop but I got the train to stop and Amtrack to stop and that was the key. Amtrak would stop, figured how to get the fast and slow train, we got it done but all those things the things that I would like to remember about Sharpe James is the Sharpe James went to city hall, went to Montreal Hall where the mayor stood next to me. Montreal Hall and Paris, I don't know which picked out public housing and I looked and I could not distinguish between public and private housing. I think it was in Paris along the same river, and he said that's right Sharpe because we don't build ghettos, they are all mixed housing, so I came back and I'll always remember that and the most important thing that Sharpe James did was to tear down those reservations for the poor. When I became mayor there were about thirty thousand people living a substandard poor housing. There was a Columbus home, there was A Hayes home, there was a Stella Right, there was a [unclear], people living in sub-standard housing, people with I think Mr. Moyer and Carl Wallace and sat before national tv and said the people are being raped, people are being robbed when she interviewed the two twins, one I gave the job to and one I exercised with and I asked how many babies have you made and I think there was a dozen babies in Stella Wright home and because we had strong sperm I said that to him last week how is your sperm, is it still strong? And he said you still remember that, he was that bro who had strong sperm. Sharpe James remember what the biblical statement was what you do for the least of my people, you do it for me. Every one of those reservations for the poor, those family high rising had been demolished with the is not always [] I beg the James demolition program given to his commissions on the house authority where I was directed to them, where I was appointed my director and like you directed them to that direction and instead of people fighting to get out of poverty housing, now they are fighting to get in, I challenge everymore and when I ran for re-election, I stood in Columbus home sight with Governor McGreevy and I said are you in Burka town, are you in George town, where are you? and then the big fight, that didn't come easy Donald Tucker took me to court. Donald Tucker and coalition for housing said Sharpe, you are getting rid of housing, you are acting like a criminal and I stood there fighting saying Donald, they have been empty for ten years, Columbus has been empty for twenty years, what do you mean I'm the Judge Dak rose signed it with Donald Tucker and the

coalition of housing and decided they have to have one for one replacement, so not only did we build the housing, state of the house town housing [unclear] we had to build other houses to make sure that was a one for one kind of development. In my way, once we were getting ready to blow, I think it was Hayes home up and Donald Tucker came up and said you shouldn't be doing this Sharpe, shouldn't be doing this and just as he said that I pushed the hammer, fake hammer

[break]

Robert Curvin: We were talking about the housing. You were talking about the housing

Sharpe James: Well, we changed that route when people would call our office and rant and say why not Lincoln Garden and to all the units we had in Central Ward. When Mr. Copy, Earl Copi who had been in Newark wrote a letter saying that Burka had done more in the last five years and what we have done in the last four years, I don't know whether he was smoking or drinking when he said that. Even the last gentleman who used to head department of the development said the hotEarl on Broad Street was the first in forty years and I said wait a minute ten hotel, eleven hotEarl was built during James's administration. What do you all do in one night? [unclear] and Mr. Earl Copi where were you at when all the things are built over the last twenty years to suggest that no hotEarl was built in the last forty years was an insult and I wrote him a letter, no answer of course, that he should go and apologize for making this type of statement but it always those that are out of Newark who would be calling the experts to speak for them, we in Newark are mute, we in Newark ignored but anyway public housing is challenging and I told Earl, Copi and I told everyone drive Prince street from Springfield Avenue to its end and you will know the success of the whole program, what do we call it in the Central Ward, a complete transformation. Go look at the central high school where we created campus like high school and I gave the board a million dollars because I believe that African Americans can't swim. I was denied this opportunity at Essex County College when they covered in Sharpe James pool and couldn't fight that battle or I would lose my job but when they denied Central High School a swimming pool, Mayor James and city school stepped up and I said we want our kids to learn how to swim. When the young guy died, drowned, the all-American football player drowned. Issues like that we believe the only way to save our city is a holistic approach, the only way to save our city is to make us competitive. The prudential center makes us competitive I mean be out there and let people from Montreal, from Europe all coming for a hockey game, maybe that's what I wanted and [unclear] said Sharpe you play tennis but I got good news for you. Sharpe James is a good, good, semi-pro hockey player and when we went to introduce this facility and we went to the Ironbound arena and I showed up with my jacket on, put skates on people went do you skate? I scored a goal that day we had a little

practice and I scored a goal. I was the skating instructor in 1954-57 when we opened the skating rink in Branch Brook Park and I was the one holding our flag in our hand when we skated out. I was the one on the governor's magazine and I was the skating instructor.

Robert Curvin: So, last question what should we do about the neighborhoods and the inner community where young men and a lot of women as well don't have work, don't have anything to do, the drug trade flourishing, the incident of crime that are overstated but nevertheless are there continue to dampen the hopes of the city in a very essential way. What do we do?

Sharpe James: Well, I believe in the future of Newark because of location to promising New York city and Philadelphia, location, location, location is important to combat the opportunity to become the destination city. um that hockey stop, the basketball. You wanna hope that Sharpe would keep his word [] and so we have hockey, basketball would become and that would what would keep this ward like what happened in Cleveland when they lost the football team, Mayor [unclear] fought to have another football team, and so we have hockey, basketball. What about the people, the indigenous people, all of that requires the community coming together, all of that starts at 920 Broad Street, the elected officials recognizing that they do not have a solution or answers to all our problems in the city and must form a kind of coalition, bring in the church, bring in the community-based organizations, bring in community leaders and create an agenda as we did with the Newark Collaboration Groups. We have done it already, the business community got to have a role in the community, they all gotta come together and I'm telling you there was a Newark collaboration group, they made me the only elected official who ever serve as President, we did have a budget for Prudential, we did say we gonna have key offices in Newark, we gonna do this, we had an agenda we had a plan. There is no existing plan, and out of that existing plan where we have the elected official, business community, community-based organizations, citizens and community leaders. One thing would tell our young people to stop walking arounds with their draws down, I mean nothing bothers me more than to see our young men not with top, not with six inches but all their underwear showing and standing next to a young lady, making a conversation you know I can't understand that who told our young people that they are attractive, that its sanitary, that's its healthy, that there is pride and self-esteem when you walk around with your draws are fully exposed and the whole pants sometimes are even falling. When Calvin Bucks, the minister of New York who ran around and painted all of New York boards with [unclear] messages, it was him so there are things that we can do, city, government can do, only the clergy can do, community can do and the business community who benefits for the city of Newark where we swell to 1.8 million in June, we work for, making money and they sleep \$255, 000. They have an important role and what happened to

the [unclear] and didn't they move it from local to region to state and a man lock himself in the office over there and the one who was the former treasurer was there and never saw anyone; they never talk about [unclear], they don't talk about [unclear]. So again, we need business community to bring back the leadership in Newark, this is the largest city in the state, spend some money, invest some money in their best interest and we need our church to do even more, to become more concerned about the holistic approach to the city as opposed to this church saying I want this land, I want that land, a whole holistic approach.

Robert Curvin: Do you ever think of running for office again?

Sharpe James: No, I've had forty years straight of being involved in the political affairs and I have scars to show for it, heart operation to show for it, cataract operation to show for it. I need